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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, June 11, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Home-Frozen Cream." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U.S.D.A.

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Ice cream is one of our favorite dishes that has an interesting past as well as an interesting present. Of all our favorite American desserts, it has had the most spectacular rise in popularity. Talk about growing famous overnight -- that's practically what happened to ice cream. Not very long ago it was a rare and costly delicacy that only the rich could afford to serve. Now, foreigners, visiting this country often speak of us as a race of ice-cream eaters. Ice cream shops are more numerous than gas stations in summer. And ice cream is almost as much of an everyday food as bread and butter. The records show that it sells at the rate of more than three hundred million gallons a year.

I don't believe anybody knows who invented ice cream. I've been told that Marco Polo brought back the first recipe for frozen cream from China way back in the thirteenth century. And history tells us that even before that, people in ancient India had learned how to chill foods by setting them in a mixture of ice and salt. But the first account of ice cream in Europe wasn't until the 16th century when Catherine de Medici's famous chef made this new, ice-cold dessert. After that the idea spread to French cooks and later the British began to serve this so-called "cream ice" or "butter ice." I've seen an English cookbook about 150 years old that gives a recipe for ice cream made with cream and milk, sugar, eggs, flavoring and arrowroot or flour for thickening. Not very different, you see, from our present-day ice cream.

Ice cream made its first appearance in America before the Revolution when the British served it at one of their fancy parties in Boston. Shortly after the Revolution a man in New York began advertising frozen cream for sale on special days. One story has it that a novelty frozen cream appeared as the dessert at one of President Washington's banquets. But most people believe that Dolly Madison was the first to introduce ice cream at the White House. Shortly before the Civil War a milk merchant in Baltimore had the happy idea of using up his surplus sweet cream by freezing it and putting it in storage. His men considered this a great joke. But in very few years this smart man had opened ice-cream plants in Baltimore, New York, Washington, and St. Louis. The wealthy enjoyed this delicacy. But it remained in the luxury class until the advent of modern refrigeration. Then, all at once, it became available not only to the millionaire but also to the little street urchin on the corner. Today we can buy it almost anywhere at moderate cost. Or, we can make it ourselves.

So much for ice cream history. Now a few points about making your own. Time was when you had to own a freezer and turn the crank if you wanted homemade ice cream. Well, you can still make it in your freezer. But you can also make it with less effort in your mechanical refrigerator. You can even make it if you have neither freezer nor refrigerator by putting it in a tight mold and packing the mold in a pail of ice and salt.

The problem in ice-cream making is to get the mixture smooth. And the experts tell me that this is a matter of regulating the size of the crystals that form in freezing. The finer the crystals, the smoother the cream. Thick rich mixtures naturally freeze in smaller crystals than thin watery mixtures.

If you use a freezer with a crank, the dasher inside takes care of breaking up the crystals. It cuts them off as they form, and it also beats air in as it turns. But if you are freezing in your refrigerator tray, or in an ice-packed mold where the cream gets no stirring during the freezing, then you have to arrange about these crystals in some other way. For one thing, you'll need a thicker mixture. And then, you'll need to whip air into it in advance. Air and some thickener like egg or gelatin will get in between the particles of water and prevent the formation of large crystals. Rapid freezing also helps.

Of course, heavy cream makes a nice smooth base for any ice-cream frozen without stirring. If you whip the cream stiff before you put it in to freeze, you'll have a fine smooth product. But so much heavy cream makes an expensive dessert and also one that's too rich for many people's taste. So, many modern recipes suggest using some kind of a thickener to make the cream smooth. You can dilute thick cream with evaporated milk or thin cream. Or you can make a cooked mixture -- rich milk thickened with gelatin or eggs or flour. Combine this thickened mixture with whipped cream. You can also use cut-up marshmallows to help thicken a cream mixture.

One more point to help you in making your own ice cream. The experts say that sugar lowers the freezing point. So they advise using as little sugar as you can get along with for quicker and easier freezing. Sirup works better than plain sugar for sweetening. You can use sugar sirup or maple sirup, corn sirup or honey.

As for flavors, you have your choice of a wide variety. Some delicious ice creams are made by grinding up candy and adding to the cream to give both flavor and sweetness. You can make peppermint ice cream by using ground peppermint stick candy instead of the sugar in the recipe. Or, you can use finely ground peanut brittle the same way. At this time of year, the fresh fruit ice creams are most delicious. Fresh strawberry or raspberry cream made by adding the crushed fresh fruit to the cream and freezing.

For fresh strawberry mousse or plain ice cream, remember to crush the fruit very soft, so that no pieces will be left to freeze in hard lumps. Add the sugar to the fruit and let the mixture stand until the sugar dissolves. For strawberry mousse, here are the proportions that make a most delicious cream:

- 1 cup of double cream whipped;
- 1 cup of crushed berries;
- 1/2 cup of sugar;
- 2 egg whites beaten stiff;
- and, for bringing out flavor, just 1/16 of a teaspoon of salt.

Time to plan Sunday dinner: Let's have breaded veal cutlets; Potatoes creamed with green peas; Panned cabbage or other green vegetable; Radishes and spring onions for relish; Raspberry or strawberry ice cream.

